When Words Cohere: The Experience of Kinetic Field Resonance in Poetry

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Words are like small magnets,
Pulling other words toward them, one by one . . .

—*Anne Lauterbach, "The Blue Door"*

SUMMARY

Words are intriguing for what they reveal about relationship and the need to connect, and connect often correlates with *cohere*. Words arise whenever and wherever there is a felt need to acknowledge or engage. This is true whether they are voiced in an announcement over the PA system, or appear in a landscape description, in family dinner conversation, a college lecture, TV ad, or as an emoji (the newest of words?) sent with an email. While the actual words used in different situations might be remarkably the same, in every case they function differently and *of necessity* undergo a change in the tone of their delivery. Tone and style of delivery can constitute a kind of language in their own right.

The manner in which words are used tells us a lot about relationship, the relationship of the speaker to the situation at hand and the relationship of words to each other within that situation. Observe, for example, the rare acuity displayed by journalist James Parker in his depiction of words, tone, and situations as they are encountered in the jumbled mix and mingle of "American bar talk":

> …And then I'm in it, for hours, in the beautiful loose warm magnanimous stream of American bar talk, which flows wittily and incoherently and aggressively and lovingly and expertly and ignorantly and eternally and momentarily out of orange-lit alcoholic portals from coast to coast.[1]

With a mix of wit, compassion, and gentle criticism, the author captures broad-ranging humanity through his keen ear for the range of emotions channeled through the use of language. Despite the discordant atmosphere evoked by Parker's crafty string of words, there is remarkable coherence in the overall tone and style of delivery of his account and definitely a sense of wholeness. It's almost poetry.

Nowhere are the relationships between words more noteworthy and significant than in poetry. The words of a poem, all of them, seem to be in agreement as to how they will perform, together and as individuals, their designated roles within the composition. There is a universal accord and consensus among them that rivals, and maybe even surpasses, the power of rhyme that would otherwise dominate their ranks. In short, words in poetry *cohere* in actions and what seems to be an inherent capacity for "discernment." Although few would argue strongly with this statement, I have the general impression that most individuals consider coherence in poetry (when they consider it at all) to be a pointless matter: "It's obvious." "It's not worth my attention." And there's my challenge! My attention is fervidly drawn to what's most obvious and commonplace because I have found that, when submitted to scrutiny, the obvious can reveal a mother lode of valuable insight and detail that would otherwise go unappreciated.

It is in this sense that my essay investigates the phenomenon of words that cohere in poetry: how they cohere, when, and to what end they cohere. And since coherence is equally characteristic of both poetry and meditation, the essay broadly examines significant parallel operations of

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[1] Parker, James. 2023. "America Inside Out: A road trip across my adopted country." *The Atlantic* 332, no. 1 (July/August): p. 91.

consciousness that occur in poetry and in meditation practice (most notably the transcending variety), my aim being to demonstrate, with multiple examples, that coherence in consciousness and coherence in poetry are deeply related, notwithstanding differences in context and scope.

In the course of my investigation, I make frequent use of analogy and bold juxtapositions as much to flush out novel, previously unnoticed, similarities as to highlight those that might be more readily apparent. Accordingly, the reader can expect to find Joy Harjo's "little houses for spirit" shaking hands with *darshan* of Indian temple images, and Baudelairean *corrrespondance* in conversation with Brahman of the Upanishads. After all, shape-shifting transformations are as characteristic of poetry and they are consciousness.

It is anticipated that, by viewing the topic of coherence from two different but complementary perspectives, we can enrich our understanding of each while significantly deepening our appreciation of commonalities shared by both.

To orient the reader to the paper's distinctly integrative and combinatory approach, the essay begins with preamble that relates a series of events removed in place and time that, by and by, cohere as a "poem."

PREAMBLE: A PERSONAL ANECDOTE

When I was very young, perhaps only ten years old, I got an autograph from sculptor Jacques Lipchitz. It was my first autograph ever and probably my first encounter with celebrity as well. At the time, the Lithuanian sculptor was in Philadelphia for the installation of his monumental bronze *Prometheus Strangling the Vulture* at the Philadelphia Museum of Art. My grade school class happened to go to the city on a school trip that particular day, and the artist met and spoke with us briefly there on the museum steps where the magnificent sculpture still stands today.

It was 1953. I was a wide-eyed country boy and was entranced, mesmerized by the experience of my school trip. It was my first real encounter with art, mythology, Europe, celebrity, the outside world. In those few breakthrough moments I came to realize that the world was big,

a whole lot bigger than what I had experienced up to that time. It was an awakening and a kind of initiation, and what brought it all together—before my actually discovering it—was poetry.

I say it was poetry because what flooded my awareness at the time wasn't any one thing in particular but the combined uniquely stirring effect of an ensemble of elements. It was not the man in front of me, his celebrity status, his sculpture, the city, or even the symbolic story of Prometheus that triggered my awakening. No, it was none of these things in isolation, but rather the way they all congealed and came together in a unified realization that struck me and stirred me to a sudden greater awareness of myself in relation to the larger world that I was to become a part—a sense of wholeness eager to grow and become realized. For this reason I can say now that it was a moment of poetry, not only because poetry does have that cumulative effect but because, for me, one of the primary distinctive qualities of poetry is its cohesiveness. Poetry arises from a rare, even sudden moment of coherence (what else is inspiration?). It builds on coherence and creates a coherent outcome from the coherent interplay of all of its parts beginning with, but not limited to, its words.

My experience at the Philadelphia Museum of Art had the elements of a living poem. It was as if I had been ushered to a portal opening onto an enlarged conception of life and future possibilities. In a sense, I had briefly gazed on the Promethean fire.

Poetry too can be such a portal and such a fire. It can be thought of as a portal between one's inner landscape and the vast universe of experience existing outside that inner landscape as well as housed deep within it. By igniting and expanding a reader's awareness, poetry has a unique ability to unite inner and outer in a very engaging, natural fashion; and this union, this sudden coming together, can have huge, unexpected consequences like onto fire. This might even happen in a manner similar to the way my inner self had the opportunity to seize upon, and eagerly process, the outer experience of meeting Jacques Lipchitz and his sculpture of Prometheus on the steps of the Philadelphia Museum of Art.

My country-boy self had discovered fire.

COHERENCE

Like the various elements of that experience in Philadelphia years ago, words in poetry cohere. Poetic language differs from language that is spoken or as it appears in common prose examples, and as a consequence words in poetry can be expected to function differently. One prominent distinction is that these words "sprout spokes" and "shoot love-arrows" at one another in order to establish inner connections. Words in poetry cohere in ways that they do only rarely in ordinary language, or not at all. While not all readers of poetry will be moved to write descriptions of coherence among words as compelling as those of poets Michael Ryan and Lyn Hejinian (cited above), nevertheless the coherence will be felt. It is palpable. It bolsters the attention and encourages intent listening. Poets and readers alike have taken note of the pervasive tendency of words in poetry to interconnect in a variety of ways throughout a given poem. A *fundamental* coherence extends from word to word and on throughout the poem, throughout its rhymes and metaphors, its sounds, rhythms, and images.

I stress the word "fundamental" because coherence is primary in a poem. The poem's words will cohere, in part, because the poem is a closed system, a world complete in itself—a universe, according to many. Moreover, a poem is a composition with its own uncommon focus, mood, or atmosphere that calls for or instills a particular style of keen mental alertness on the part of the reader. This aspect seems to be insufficiently studied. No one talks much about the sense of quiet attention that accompanies reading or listening to most poems, probably because it is something we have come to expect from poetry—or maybe there are just too many more exciting topics to linger over.

Poetry causes us to slow down and become silent. The common experience of being drawn into a poem and settled in silence is largely due to the influence of a poem's profoundly unique focus and underlying coherence, which has its own origins in silence. This coherence, in turn, very subtly connects readers to the silence that grand poetry builds upon and of which it partakes.

A poet's best lines and finest words are guided by a steady presence of mind that keeps the poem's flow and meaning in natural tow. They work together in a coherent fashion because they are born from a mental state that is coherent, that maintains its coherence. For this reason the entity commonly thought of as "the poet's Muse" might rightly be considered the personification of a particular state of mind through which the poet's

inspiration, insight, or vision is transmitted and guided in a mindful, coherent manner. The revered figure of the Muse represents a presiding spirit that governs the integrity of a composition throughout and hence is responsible for its coherence. It is thus the dominant mental state from which originate not only a poem's words, words that cohere, but which governs the reader's attention as well.

Most poems will have a single subject matter and one primary voice. And in these poems the words, all the many words, are only discrete elements of the whole, which is all one. In this sense these many words are all one vibrant, many-faceted word, a word "bright as the sun" (Octavio Paz). In the course of reading a poem, one can experience that such words might alternately anticipate or recall one another and even sometimes blend. Coherence being a major distinction of poetic language, ultimately a poem coheres because it's all one in its singular language.

It has to do with the peculiar functioning of poetic language, so different from ordinary language of the everyday. As poetry, cohering words function as living beings acutely aware of their surroundings. Such words have a mouth; they speak. They have ears; they hear and can listen. And eyes; they spy on each other, listen attentively and look watchfully on one another the way band members and chamber ensembles eye one another in performance to "keep the ship afloat" and on track. In poetry words use their mouths, ears, and eyes—each with their unique material expression—to shine *darshan* on each other and on readers as if to ensure them full, unlimited access to the sacred life of the poem.

THE GOAL TO BE SIMPLE

Darshan. I had intended to keep this simple. Coherence happens. Coherence in poetry happens with and without a poet's willful intention and to greater and lesser degrees, but it happens. For this reason, there is really nothing to prove here; I merely describe. Everything in poetry, as in life—as in consciousness—is interconnected. So I'd like to keep it simple. I want it to be as simple as the country boy meeting Jacques Lipchitz on the steps of the Philadelphia Museum of Art and encountering art for the first time through the sculptor's *Prometheus*. I want it to be simple as breath. Like breathing, taking it in and letting it out.

The language of metaphor, so common to poetry, redirects words towards the experience expressed in them, by renaming them.[2] Just as in metaphor there are two meanings running together and crossing simultaneously back and forth, in poetry viewed as a whole there are two languages (conceptual and figurative) and two realities (mundane and visionary) running side by side but also crossing over from time to time, having intimate interminglings that connect them and make them co-equals in the abstraction that is poetry. Moreover, in this poetry, there is also another "breathing" process, one of consciousness turned inward; an inner "breathing" back and forth weaving together the outer world with inner, subjective life, collective reality and individual insight in the production of novel inter*being,* the characteristic being of a poem.

Although it deals with abstract subject matter, and acknowledging that writing a poem is no effortless undertaking, I'd like my words about poetry to be kept as simple—and necessary—as breathing in and out; like my perception of a bird on a limb or the voice of a child at play—distinct, but unified in particular life meaning expressed as a fully realized abstraction on the page. Just as it is represented in the Aztec glyph, poetry is the outbreath (manifest expression) of a visionary inbreath (inspired insight).

Along these lines, poet Ross Gay has said the following: "Like, poems are made of breath. So poems are bodily in themselves. And when we read them to other people, they become part of other people's bodies. Or when we read other people's lives, the way they've constructed a poem, we're breathing them."[3] It's true, a reader will invariably mirror the breathing naturally occurring within a poem. Who among us has not experienced it? With this in mind, with regard to coherence between and among words in a poem, it might be said that within the body of a poem words breathe in and through other words, they exchange breath with other words.

Nothing that I have written about coherence is all that novel or profound. It's part of common experience and common knowledge. Simple, then, but like so many things that are most commonplace, most everyday, it's difficult to pin them down and discuss them in their most subtle, nuanced values and qualities. Because coherence is so much a part of our common experience of poetry it is simply overlooked or taken for granted. For this very reason the matter of coherence in poetry deserves

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2 Foster, Roger S. 2007. *Adorno: The Recovery of Experience*, Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, p. 154.

3 "Here's what makes poetry and gardens a perfect pair, according to 2 poet-gardeners," Ross Gay in discussion with Tess Taylor on NPR's *All Things Considered*, June 21, 2022.

receiving considered and deliberate attention even when it gets complicated, as in this paper.

DARSHAN

So now *darshan*. You may know of the word through readings about India, or if fortunate you may have traveled there and experienced its customs and traditions firsthand. As a result of the burgeoning interest in Eastern spirituality and related meditation techniques no doubt, the word has begun to gain a foothold in Western countries—Europe, North and South America—where it appears in popular literature from time to time and, more rarely, in casual conversation. Darshan is rooted in time-honored sacred traditions having to do with the power of the gaze, in particular taking in the sight of a deity or holy personage, and it is from those traditions that (invoking poetic license) I propose to draw parallels with poetry.

Vedic scholar Anna Bonshek references darshan as "the auspicious viewing of a sacred image to take into oneself the power of the deity or a blessed glimpse of the divine," adding that "it is a 'seeing' or 'viewing' that involves interactivity and a heightened perception."[4] Throughout this essay I will be exploring the various ways that poetry and the sacred images of an Indian temple might be considered comparable in their functions. Allow me to begin by considering what's sacred about poetry.

Without leaving the secular realm, I call a poem "sacred" because the best of poems inspires awe and respect for their uniqueness and extraordinary power. As a rule one enters a poem quietly, or at least readily settles down once reading has commenced. Appreciation of a poem requires this settled state of strong and steadfast attention induced by the reading. As the reader begins to "cohere," to become collected within himself, the poem of coherent words rapidly becomes a sacred space, a space set apart from external reality by virtue of its unique language, rhythms, qualities of form, and extraordinary images. As a consequence, one reads a poem with eyes seeing, ears hearing, and mind engaged at levels of silent refinement experienced rarely outside the boundaries of the poem. The reader finds himself temporarily transformed in mind and heart by virtue of exposure to the poem's array of harmonious harmonized and harmonizing influences. He or she experiences an inner expansion and

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[4] Bonshek, Anna J. 2016. "In Sight—Cognition or Darshana: A New Perspective on Artistic Vision." *Journal of Maharishi Vedic Research Institute* 1 (November): 41.

loosening up even as the attention becomes uncommonly acute. They might experience something comparable to the transitory freedom one enjoys (from persona, responsibilities, the tyranny of time) at the moment of takeoff on a transcontinental flight—call it *poetic transport*. In summary, a great poem can display Bonshek's "seeing and viewing that involves interactivity and heightened perception."

It would be hardly surprising to learn that the coherent attributes of poetry extend to the reader and have qualities of darshan that routinely affect breathing and even promote hemispheric coherence. Any reader or listener of a poem has experienced the former, and there are even scientific data in support of the latter. Neuroimaging studies, for example, have shown that simple reading, by itself, is sufficient to activate coherence in specific areas of the brain. Anecdotal accounts, moreover, suggest that this naturally occurring coherence is greatly amplified when the subject is reading a poem.[5]

Is personified Muse the source and name of darshan in a poem? Is it its correlate? "Image," after all, is at the root of "*imag*ination," and one can readily envision the Muse as that numinous *image* within the poet's imagination from which the poet "takes darshan"—inspiration and guidance for the language and measure of his poetry. Understood in this manner, the Muse is the innermost goad to creative intelligence that shines darshan onto the poet via his imagination. And does this Muse of a poet's inspiration not persist in the poem and breathe throughout the poem? Does this personification of creative intelligence, inspiration, and intuition not order and hold the poem together through her voice and ever watchful gaze? Is it not the glue whose speaking, gazing breath holds the words of a poem together even as it animates the poet, the poem, and the reader in one accord? The poem I am describing, the poem as I read it, is full of images, is all darshan, all numinous connection; its words are all eyes—for me and for each other. The poem would have me assume its likeness, to breathe its breath and speak its language.

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[5] A 1998 study by Julie A. Fiez and Steven E. Petersen published in the *Proceedings of the National Academy of Science*, USA, reported findings replicated by similar studies: "Given that language functions generally are viewed as strongly left-lateralized, it is interesting to note that bilateral activation was observed in many areas, including anterior and posterior portions..." ("Neuroimaging studies of word reading," *PNAS*, 95, No. 3 (February, 1998). In *Inside Maharishi's Ashram* (CreateSpace Independent Publishing, 2017), professor of literature Rhoda Orme-Johnson relates how she and her husband David, professor of psychology, conducted informal pilot studies measuring brain integration (EEG coherence) of students while they were reading poetry. Although preliminary results of those investigations reportedly were encouraging, the project did not result in any published data.

Poetry is about seeing. It's about perception. So, darshan.

All this being said, could reading a poem be comparable to entering a temple, a cathedral? Can a poem be that sacred? Rilke and Baudelaire seemed to think so—they were poets themselves and in a position to know. For example, in one very well-known poem Rilke relates how, with poetry, Orpheus (poet of poets) was able to build a temple "deep inside the hearing" of entranced wild beasts grown quiet within themselves "not from fear…but just from listening" to his song.[6] In his poem "Correspondences" (Fr. *Correspondances*), Baudelaire for his part speaks of Nature as a temple, all of whose features strike correspondences with higher realms ("*La Nature est un temple...*"). But this temple, this "forest of symbols," is also the poem itself, a poem distinguished by its own resonant web of intricate "correspondences." There are correspondences between and among symbols, perfumes, colors, and sounds that respond to one another and "intermingle from afar"; words "that have the expanse of infinite things"; and "ecstasies of mind and senses."[7]

As noted earlier, I use "darshan" in a figurative sense to represent these "correspondences," the phenomenon of parts of a poem—words—that strike up resonances with one other and with the whole of the composition. These resonances themselves are a kind of seeing, of perceiving and even seeking out the unity in apparent differences.

Baudelaire's poem constitutes, moreover, an infinite coherence of correspondences extending well beyond ordinary boundaries of logic and reason and usually governed purely by sound alone. In the original French of Baudelaire's poem, there is a mesmerizing flow of layered textures of vowels and consonants where words open wide to give and receive, calling out and responding to one another in "long echoes" of sound throughout: "*les sons se répondent"* (note here the echoing effect of two stressed "o"s and alliteration of sibilant "s," sounds that not only "respond" to one another but "correspond" as well). The reader can hardly remain indifferent to this astonishing give and take of sounds. No, not at all, for Baudelaire's poem is itself the equivalent of Nature's temple, successive verses acting as if temple pillars that surround the reader with their commingled and fusing word-sounds ("*confuses paroles*"), leaving him as if "encaged" within this temple/poem, the better to traverse on his own those forests of symbols and experience these resonating words, scents,

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6 *Sonnets to Orpheus*, number 1.

7 Lagarde, André, and Laurent Michard. 1969. *XIX Siècle: Les Grands Auteurs Français du Programme*, Vol. V. Paris: Éditions Bordas: 431.

colors, sounds, and ecstasies of the spirit. Matthew Zapruder has noted, "All these things and sensations don't sing of *meaning*, they sing of *transport*, that is, of change and a journey away from the mundane, of both the mind and the senses."[8]

I reference the concentrated, internally self-interactive poems of Baudelaire and Rilke because I wish to demonstrate how, in the kinetic of poetry, words cast darshan on one another by virtue of their unique propensity to cohere; and how, largely by virtue of the coherence they generate through their internal operations, poems can display qualities considered "sacred." They might even be considered "temples," not in a religious sense but certainly in the sense of spaces charged with an intense concentration of transcendent spiritual vision. They have an energy not entirely of this world even as they arise from the world, the energy of spirit breaking out of and through the gross material expression of language. They are examples of the poetic consciousness exceeding itself.

CONSCIOUSNESS

Consciousness is the stuff of everything that exists. It is the most basic element in creation. Pure consciousness is pure existence: It is the silent, unmanifest, ground state of being and creative intelligence that takes on material expression throughout manifest creation—rivers, reptiles, trees, insects, the rain, bears, birds, roses…and poems. Everything in the universe is the expression of consciousness.[9] Poetry, in particular poetic language, is the result of operations of consciousness that are active within words themselves as well as in the poet's creative imagination. These operations, in turn, are transferred to individual words and language units appearing in lines of poetry on the printed page. It is consciousness that accounts for and supports both coherence and darshan in poetry, and for this reason it is vital to our discussion to understand consciousness and how it takes expression in the operations of poetic language.

Paradoxical as it may seem to our busily discursive minds, the language of a poem has its origin in the dynamic silence of unexpressed, pure consciousness. Each word of poetry has its origin in silence and there are also silent gaps, barely perceptible and commonly unnoticed, between one word and another, and even word syllables, throughout a poem. Although commonly ignored, it is in these gaps that much of the creative

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8 Zapruder, Matthew. 2017. *Why Poetry*. New York: Harper Collins: 168.

9 Consciousness is described here using the language of Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, whose contributions to the science of consciousness are referenced throughout this essay.

work of poetry occurs—subtle interactions that occur *within consciousness* (i.e., "behind the scenes," unseen within very fine fabrics of silence as yet unexpressed) as one sound is being dismantled, another in process of construction etc. In the interest of unbroken flow, the poet might even purposely choose her words to assist in making seamless this work of creative transformation within the silence. Conversely, if the aim is to highlight conflict or obstacles those words need to be chosen with similar care as well. Just as often, however, utterances will arise intuitively, that is, through spontaneous impulse without much conscious intervention at all. Whatever the case, consciously or unconsciously, the poet is forever negotiating with silence—shaping, animating, and channeling the latent sounds within silence at every step along the way whether through simple rhythms and repetitions or more specific rhyme, metaphor, alliteration…or something else.

There are few poets I can think of whose work exemplifies a poet's relationship with silence—with consciousness—more conclusively than Peruvian poet Javier Ortiz Cabrejos. Silence fills the heart of his poetry and can be felt in every breath and word. That such spare, limpid utterances could appear written on the page at all is virtually inconceivable; and yet, paradoxically, Silence is incorporated into this Poet's work in an almost tangible manner. One Spanish-language critic has written that Javier's words "evoke a fullness of silence that reveals and whispers infinity to the reader" (translation mine). This evaluation is completely on target, for so pristine and well integrated with each other are this Poet's words that they seem to enter the reader's awareness more as golden waves of consciousness than as words. His poems are *dialogs with silence,* and even *within* silence, that inner Silence residing deep within consciousness. They are dialogs that breathe of intimate Nearness, the Nearness and Unity of Brahm.

One notable case in point is the poem entitled "*Canción de las formas*" (Song of the Forms) in which Ortiz Cabrejos writes, "*No existo / Soy tu poema ...*" (I don't exist / I am your poem). Although these words have their own significance in their intended context, what this one line says is true of Javier's writing throughout. He doesn't exist, or barely; his ego identity is engaged just enough to voice the words coming through his poems. He seems to be so lost in the all-enveloping fullness of the silent, unmanifest Totality of consciousness, that the Supreme Reality, reality of Brahm, might rightly be considered to be the real poet, the only speaker and writer of the "created" poem…which just happens to be Javier Ortiz Cabrejos. So

once again, what is this poem, this Javier Ortiz Cabrejos? It is "*Tú / consciente de Ti,*" You, the Supreme Reality, conscious of Yourself.

Javier's poem seems to be inspired by a profound contemplation of name and form, a mystical realization of name taking form in his own experience as the expressed embodiment of that very presence he invokes in his poem. In his poem he is simultaneously the receptacle *and the being* of that Silence residing in his awareness, in consciousness. He speaks *for and as* the Being residing in the receptacle—himself a created wholeness that is the manifest expression of Unmanifest Being, of "You conscious of You."

The title of Javier's collected book of poems is *Brahm Darshan: Himnos*.[10] The title evokes the great variety of individual canonic images made accessible to devotees for darshan in temples throughout India, images that represent the multiple forms Divinity has assumed under many different names. I venture to translate the book title as Witnessing Brahm: Hymns; or more simply Insights of Brahm. I wish we could go through an example of Javier's poetry in order to gain an appreciation of how and to what extent the words of his poems the words of his poems cohere and even "take darshan" from one another the better to drive that coherence. But his poems pose challenges to translation and require ample open space—*silent space*—to be appreciated fully. Nevertheless, in "*Canción de las formas*" we get an appreciation of something even greater, namely of how the *poet himself* can experience the soul-stirring, mystical grace of cohering, and cohering on a high level of profound intimacy: union with the source of all creativity and all creation in the dynamic, silent fullness of Infinite Being.

Speaking now from an even higher end of poetry, poetry of the Veda, Maharishi Mahesh Yogi has stated in this regard that in the flow of Vedic sound "the self-referral dynamics of consciousness expresses itself in the sequence of sound and silence—the creative process is in silence, and the creation is expressed through sound." Significantly, he adds that this "alternation of silence and sound, and how much silence and how much sound…[constitutes] the fundamental building blocks of creation" Finally, further illuminating the nature and importance of the sequence of sound and silence—our words/word syllables and gaps discussed above—Maharishi states that "by virtue of the self-interacting dynamics of its

[10] Cabrejos, Javier Ortiz. 2012. *Brahm Darshan: Himnos*. Lima: Editorial Mesa Redonda S. A. C.. In Maharishi's Vedic Science, Brahm is the eternal, immortal, blissful Self and unmanifest Unified Field of Natural Law. It is absolute fullness of Being characterized by pure intelligence, perfect orderliness, and infinite creativity.

unified nature, the unmanifest, unbounded ocean of consciousness spontaneously expresses the mechanics of manifesting. The quality of specificity comes into being without disrupting the continuum of the eternal, self-referral generality of consciousness. It is a self-referral, superfluid system of expressing specificity within the unity of eternal generality."[11]

While Maharishi's statements on Veda may seem a far cry from discussions of today's poetry, they do cast light on governing principles of consciousness that are constant throughout time and have the potential of heightening our appreciation of poetics across the board, of theoretical and practical aspects of poetry that come into play in poetry of all times and all places regardless of content or philosophical/ideological orientation (political, metaphysical, amatory, religious, nature-based, etc.). That being said, in my experience, consciousness (its presence, its significance) is generally undervalued or totally overlooked in most conversations around poetry, and this neglect represents a great lost opportunity. As I hope to demonstrate in this paper, there is potential for gaining deeper appreciation of poetry, language, and the work of humanities generally by assiduously developing an understanding of consciousness however it might pertain to our respective research activities. A very practical way of doing this might be to undertake a meditation practice such as Maharishi's Transcendental Meditation in order to develop deep understanding of the operations of one's own consciousness and support one's personal wellness while engaged in a program with demonstrated benefits for the natural environment and the human community.

FROM UNITY TO DIVERSITY—AND BACK: THE WILL TO COHERE

Judging merely by its superficial appearance on the page, a poem is physically static, the words motionless, inactive. Then, of a sudden, even a cursory reading once commenced reveals the opposite to be true as words and word sounds move and resonate all over the page. Sometimes they may seem to change in significance and intensity in a reader's awareness as her mind becomes increasingly more attentive, her perception keener, and she enters a heightened state of awareness. If the poem is very good,

[11] Maharishi Mahesh Yogi. 1997. *Celebrating Perfection in Education*, 2nd edition. India: Age of Enlightenment Press: 10–11. In his *Apaurusheya bhashya* Maharishi also describes in detail the transformations and subtle interactions of sounds between words and even letters in the creative expression of verses of Rik Veda: *Ibid.*, 164–173.

and the reader's appreciation mounts to a high level, consciousness becomes aware of itself and exults in the boundless exercise of its own creativity and intelligence. This is, at least, an example of a poem taking hold of itself and its reader as the static poem is discovered to be alive and undergoing constant change from line to line, from beginning to end. At the same time, as noted in Maharishi's comments above, while manifesting from the unmanifest, consciousness maintains its unified nature by virtue of its own self-interacting dynamics. This is perhaps the primary explanation for how and why words can and do cohere in poetic expression, the stated focus of this paper.

When consciousness exceeds itself in the reading of a poem, it is language that exceeds itself first of all. Words of a poem do their assigned work and that assignment most often includes breaking away from the norm, from patterns of habitual and ossified usage; for a thrilling moment what was once an unnoticed wallflower moves center stage, larger than life.

Though materially distinct, the words of a poem are not separate. They are all engaged in contributing to and communicating the same overarching thought, intent, and mood much the same as separate instruments in a symphonic orchestra are engaged in communicating a common musical score. Musical notes, like words, break away from an initial unity they shared in the silent space before the conductor's baton springs into motion, and they come together again at various points during performance. Poem and musical performance alike seem to entertain and enlighten us as over and over again they move through cycles of coming together and falling apart and coming together again.

In her book *Veda and Torah: Transcending the Textuality of Scripture*, Berkeley professor Barbara Holdrege cites Shankara's depiction of the Vedas as "the subtle blueprint containing the eternal words from which the forms of creation are manifested..." The Vedas "constitute an archetypal plan that contains the natural names of all the forms of creation."[12] The world, she continues, has cycles of creation and dissolution, called *kalpas.* The world and material universe are periodically created, destroyed, and recreated in never-ending cycles, but "creation is essentially the same in all kalpas." Following Shankara, Holdrege writes that the Vedic words used by the creator to bring forth each new creation "become manifest" in the mind of the creator. "These words are not the creator's own thoughts...but are rather eternal words

[12] *Ibid.*, pp. 127–128.

that manifest periodically in the demiurge's mind at the beginning of each new kalpa."[13] Vedic words, then, arise from unmanifest pure consciousness and then take expression as created forms. There is no distinction between word and form; form is simply the natural material expression of the word.[14] When each subsequent material creation is dissolved, words return to their eternal unmanifest source. Each subsequent universe is fashioned anew in accordance with the set pattern just described—a pattern of manifestation followed by dissolution, return to origins.

The seemingly "ritualistic" aspects of the Vedic pattern outlined above resembles what I see happening on a much smaller scale in poetry when words are placed in poetry as enactments of creation. Words in poetry are created and placed for a specific purpose, they perform, and when they perform very well within a poem they work themselves right back to the transcendental source. Their "performance," of course, will vary from reader to reader. If the reader is very good, and the words are also very good words—when words cohere with each other and reader coheres with words—then *poetic transport* is possible and words speed headlong in the direction of their transcendent origins with the reader in tow.

With his expansive multicultural and ancient/modern compendium of poetry *Technicians of the Sacred* (1967), in its third printing at this writing, Jerome Rothenberg elucidated the sacred, ritual roots of poetry. That the language of poetry still is, or can be, a ritual language receives short shrift in contemporary discourse. Nevertheless, the ritual significance of language remains most apparent, and most commented, with regard to its relationship to the Earth, community, body and spirit, and even in purely prosaic themes. It is a property of poetic language that has come to the fore above all in my own cogitations around how words in poetry cohere.

Different cultures employ ritual for a wide range of situations, from births and marriages to death, and there are even organizational procedures designed to promote cohesion in business and classroom operations.[15] A social scientist speaking on the beneficial effects of group

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13 *loc. cit.*

14 For more on the delicate relationship between *Nāma* and *Rūpa* in the Vedas, please see: Sands, William F. 2022. "Name and Form in the Vedic Language," Chapter 6 of *Everything Is Made of Vedic Sounds.* Maharishi International University Press.

15 See, for example: Simkin, Shona. 2023. "The Rituals of Case Method Teaching: How four HBS faculty members utilize rituals in the MBA classroom." *Harvard Business School News*, 25 January 2023.

meditation and the need to establish "large coherence-creating groups" has stated the following re coherence: "Coherence means the quality of forming a unified whole. A coherent system is one in which the parts of a system function together harmoniously to support the whole and the whole supports the parts."[16] David Orme-Johnson speaks of this coherence producing a "field effect," and mid-twentieth century poet Charles Olson famously touted poetry's "field" characteristics in projective verse, in effect acknowledging the powerful effect that coherence can have in poetry. Olson states the following:

> The objects which occur at every given moment of composition... must be handled as a series of objects in field in such a way that a series of tensions (which they also are) are made to *hold*, and to hold exactly inside the content and the context of the poem which has forced itself, through the poet and them, into being.[17]

As shown, accounts from business leaders, social scientists, and poets alike attest to importance of ritual and organizational procedures in the pursuit of cohesion in their respective areas of expertise. As a language of ritual and organizational procedures, it should come as no surprise to anyone that poetic language should readily promote coherence in a similar manner.

Olson returns repeatedly to how language ("the line") is ordered in poetry and how this ordering differs from traditional grammar used in prose or ordinary speech. Because projective verse is "a form of energy transferred from where the poet got it" to the reader, projective verse originates, or is connected to, a "primordial dimension," a level deep within ordinary waking state consciousness, there whereby being closer to the source, consciousness is already quite coherent, unified and therefore capable of "holding," cohering.

For the moment, for purposes of this paper, let us consider that what grammar is to prose (structure, logical thinking), word cohesion is to poetry. A good case in point is Angie Estes' poem "Nigh Clime," whose title already coheres so noticeably through rhyme, through sound. In an as yet unpublished work, I discuss the poem's cohesiveness as constituting a

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[16] Orme-Johnson, David. 2022 "Field Effects of Consciousness: A Seventeen-Year Study of the Effects of Group Practice of the Transcendental Meditation and TM-Sidhi Program on Reducing National Stress in the United States." *World Journal of Social Sciences* 9, No. 2.

[17] Olson, Charles. 1967. *Selected Writings of Charles Olson,* edited by Robert Creeley. New York, NY: New Directions Publishing: 20.

"grammar of poetic transport." I realize now that what I was really attempting to zero in on, and elucidate, was the way words in poetry cohere through the use of a variety of poetic techniques. I was trying to express *the experience of kinetic field resonance in poetry* and demonstrate, via Estes' poem, how words that cohere and resonate together generate a very particular kind of field, Olson's notion of FIELD perhaps, that promotes in readers some sense of transport. Hence, "grammar of poetic transport."

What are the characteristics of this transport? It might be said that poetic transport opens the mind to a place beyond intellectual understanding or inquiry; it rises above even aesthetic considerations. In poetic transport the gates of the mind open up to a universe of life unbounded and without purpose beyond the joy it experiences and radiates, the enjoyment of life's own joy in itself.

BACKTRACKING VIA W.C. WILLIAMS' *THE RED WHEELBARROW*

Returning momentarily to the anecdote of Jacques Lipchitz related at the beginning of this essay, it must be noted that none of the component elements from that event on the steps of the Philadelphia Museum of Art had any significant prior connection to one another—the sculptor, my elementary school, Greek mythology etc.—but they were joined, their connections became significant, and *cohered*, by virtue of their entering my unique perceptual apparatus, my immediate personal experience and deep psyche—all of this only fully realized intellectually from a distance decades removed. In this way, they constitute a sort of "poem" that evokes the importance of the "primordial dimension" in Olson's notion of projective verse.

William Carlos Williams' "The Red Wheelbarrow" is a poem of this nature. In the poem there appears a wheelbarrow (red, and wet with rain) and beside it some white chickens. The introductory verses, "so much depends/ upon" suggest that, although in and of themselves there is nothing extraordinary in these mundane items, there is nevertheless something about them and their relationship to one another in the poet's perception that merits contemplating. But that alone does not make them a poem. What makes them a poem, aside from the (imagined) visual arrangement of the chickens and wheelbarrow (one stationary, the other mobile), color, and the tactile element of glazed wet (also feathers, wood or metal), is the visual arrangement of the words whereby the poem

chooses to communicate the arresting visual image in a meaningful, enduring way. "The poem must find a form equal to its revelation."[18]

Word arrangement, a peculiar combination of advance and hesitation (in this case four unrhymed couplets "varying in their variations" of three- and one-word verses), strangely complements the visual image they convey and helps the poem cohere as an integrated whole. There's no punctuation or capital/lower case distinction to hinder the words from performing their magic—or direct the reader's attention in a predetermined, "prescribed" manner—with the result that words and readers are free to interact creatively in initial and all subsequent readings. In sum, a felicitous marriage between well-chosen and well-placed visual and auditory components largely accounts for the enormous success of this poem, a poem in which, using the simplest of means, Williams has touched upon something primordial, even ritualistic.

This well-known poem is extremely short and well worth a look here, if only to contemplate and savor its utter simplicity.

The Red Wheelbarrow

so much depends
upon

a red wheel
barrow

glazed with rain
water

beside the white
chickens

There it is: 4 "couplets," 8 lines, 16 words—pleasing already in Pythagorean proportion of numbers! In Williams' poem (as in all poetry) "so much depends upon" the arrangement of the words and the

[18] Quotations are from "The Red Wheelbarrow," by William Logan, appearing in *Parnassus* 34, nos. 1 & 2 (2015): 204–231. The poem by W. C. Williams appears in *The Collected Poems*, *Vol. I, 1909–1939,* New Directions Publishing, 1938, and is in public domain.

relationship of words with each other. Even beyond the arrangement of words (which is peculiar, special), however, a reader might ponder exactly what it is that depends upon this wheelbarrow. And is it *just* the wheelbarrow? What of the rain water and placement beside the white chickens? The poem is a string of images; everything, that is, beyond the beginning two lines. Lack of punctuation, moreover, reinforces a sense that together these images comprise a single larger image. Like pieces in a collage they suggest a single *composition* that doubtlessly reverberates with the visual composition that so struck Williams' poetic perception on a particular day back there in Rutherford, New Jersey, of the 1920s.

As conceived by Williams, the poem very deliberately causes us to focus on the individual components of that composition. We can't get away from these *things*: a wheelbarrow, chickens, rainwater. And not just a wheelbarrow but its color, *red;* not just chickens but their color, *white.* And rainwater suffused over the entire composition. It's true that Williams obliges readers to take note of these items, these significant details, but when the poem is considered as a whole it's the relationship between these individual things that vitalizes the total image. Between *and among things*, because upon reading the poem these three essentials may not remain entirely stationary; they may be interchanged or superimposed upon one another as afterimages. This quality gives this poem of very spare, essential elements a simple but arresting strength and resonance. Despite its short length and spare, essential elements—and perhaps *because* of them—Willliams' poem lacks nothing. It is in every way complete and whole in itself.

Williams' poem is also a prime example of the great *economy* of poetic language. With only 16 words the poem is a classic of striking imagery. Such economy relies in large part on the ability of words and word images to cohere. Because it is so tightly sparse in language, Williams' poem might also demonstrate that the drive to cohere is fueled or necessitated by the economy of poetic language (i.e., fewer words are *obliged* to cohere). Notice in the two poems that follow how economy of means seems to foster coherence among its members, and vice versa, how words' ability to cohere seems to be a facilitator and enabler of economical means. The two are seemingly interdependent, coming together as a unique class of orderliness. In poetry, less truly is more.

"NIGH CLIME" BY ANGIE ESTES

In Estes' sprightly poem,[19] the primary tools that effectuate coherence are the more common ones of rhyme and repetition which easily lend themselves to the production of entrainment through sound. Of themselves the words of the poem have little immediate logical connection to one another. Rather, an almost insanely loose, whimsical "narrative" is propelled and held together exclusively by properties of sound and rhythm. Of these two, rhyme is primary. Estes employs rhyme in all its many guises and disguises: syllabic rhyme, end rhyme, internal rhyme, slant rhymes (imperfect, near, oblique) and pararhyme. Add to this a heady mix of pervasive wordplay as well as self-admiring phrases flaunting pleasantly lilting alliterations ("aching with echo," "ogle o'er ego," "nigh in the niche," a "lien on our line", etc.) and boldly bounding homonyms strewn far and near throughout the poem.

The reader can readily understand that in this poem the degree of contrast between traditional grammar and the novel poetic language it supports is so dramatic that to my mind it becomes legitimate to argue the case for two coexisting grammars, *two grammars running concurrently*, the one governed by parts of speech that help cover a poem's directionality; and the other governed by phonology, qualities of rhythm and sound that rise above and soar beyond the limiting groundedness of traditional grammar. The one is fundamentally linear, the other unbounded, ranging all over the place—up and down, left and right, and even diagonally across the space of the poem. The success of "Nigh Clime" relies little on strict relationships between nouns, verbs, adverbs, prepositions, and modifiers. Instead, it is driven to an exceptional degree by the vast arsenal of poetic devices at the poet's disposal—the relationships and frequent coalescing of rhyme, rhythm, simile, synesthesia, metonymy, alliteration, wordplay etc. All of this is housed in a traditional grammar that is ultimately transcended once these devices have launched their desired effects. For this reason, I'd like to propose that the work of "poetic techniques" be classified as a second (but hardly secondary) "grammar," a grammar that in poetry expands upon and enhances the work of traditional grammar. This grammar is governed less by syntax and more on an "associational logic" based on sounds and wordplay.

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[19] The poem appears in *Enchantée* 2012. Oberlin, Ohio: Oberlin College Press: 15.

Nigh Clime

Who remembers the waving hinge, how
the spine of a book or elm could limn
the locale of *gee* and *hmm* and *oh*, tingle
with the *nom* of its genome chill as if Patsy Cline
were at the helm of the angelic galleon, singing
I'm crazy, crazy for feeling so blue.
When the long

is gone and the curtain opens
its glee like leaves in April, we'll mingle
like scenery and ogle o'er ego and e'en, the glim
of ago.
We still come helloing up the lingo
hill, its chenille lawn aching
with echo: omen, a lien
on our line. Lean your nog
against mine own and lift the hem
of home, not inchmeal but once: your chin
on its agile cello, your leg nigh
in the niche of time.

(Used by permission, the Oberlin College Press)

The four sentences of "Nigh Clime" are each one sustained long enjambement, one continuous long thought, one great, long, sustained breath; and at least ninety percent of each sentence's utterances are acting in the service of *poieses* by virtue of word sounds and assorted poetic devises "acting" as words and "disguised" as familiar parts of speech within such "sentences." The only really familiar looking/sounding words are "Who remembers" from the opening line and "I'm crazy" from the title of a Patsy Cline song. As a matter of fact, such commonplace language feels out of place in this poem, except perhaps as contrast. So while I speak of sentences, in reality, in terms of their functioning in the poem, Estes's words and word groupings are not mere "words" at all nor do they form mere "sentences," but rather much more.

Estes' "words and phrases" are strings of poetic devises, and whereas in normal syntax words exercise a fixed function within a

particular sentence (noun, verb, preposition etc.), poetic devises serve functions that are at once fixed and mutable, limited and unlimited. While exercising one function here in this sentence, they are often enlisted to perform roles that cause them to migrate extensively over the page. They flex and they bend; they are not limited in the performance of any one, single function in any particular place in the poem. They are relatively unrestricted in their sphere of influence. In this regard, "Nigh Clime" would seem to be the realization of Mallarmé's combinatory ideal, a poem whose chance exchanges and dance-like interactions of words, word forms and meanings somehow all reflect one another and, in the words of Gilles Deleuze, they "never stop restarting each other."[20]

It is above all through wordplay that the language of "Nigh Clime" lifts and flies off the page. It bounces and ricochets from line to line, most words seemingly acting as flying missiles. A reader of Estes experiences in no uncertain terms what Olson has called the kinetic of composition by FIELD. These word-missiles dart about the poem like so many paper airplanes, but ultimately they are given free rein to fly about a reader's enlivened and heightened consciousness. Because these words are themselves capable of transport, they can readily bestow transport on the reader. The reader's consciousness responds to the poem's invitation to play. The poem not only attracts and holds the reader's attention but dashes off as well with her consciousness in tow.

Olson speaks of the whole poem as a kind of "FIELD…where all the syllables and all the lines must be managed in their relations to each other." Every element in the poem "(the syllable, the line, as well as the image, the sound, the sense) must be taken up as participants in the kinetic of the poem just as solidly as we are accustomed to take what we call the objects of reality."[21] But it is the syllable "the smallest particle of all" that matters most to Olson. For him, the syllable is "the kin and pin of versification, what rules and holds together the lines, the larger forms, of a poem…. It is by their syllables that words juxtapose in beauty, by these particles of sound as clearly as by the sense of the words which they compose." He advises poets to listen for the syllable, "to engage speech where it is least careless—and least logical" because the "finesse, and the practice, lie here, at the minimum and source of speech."[22]

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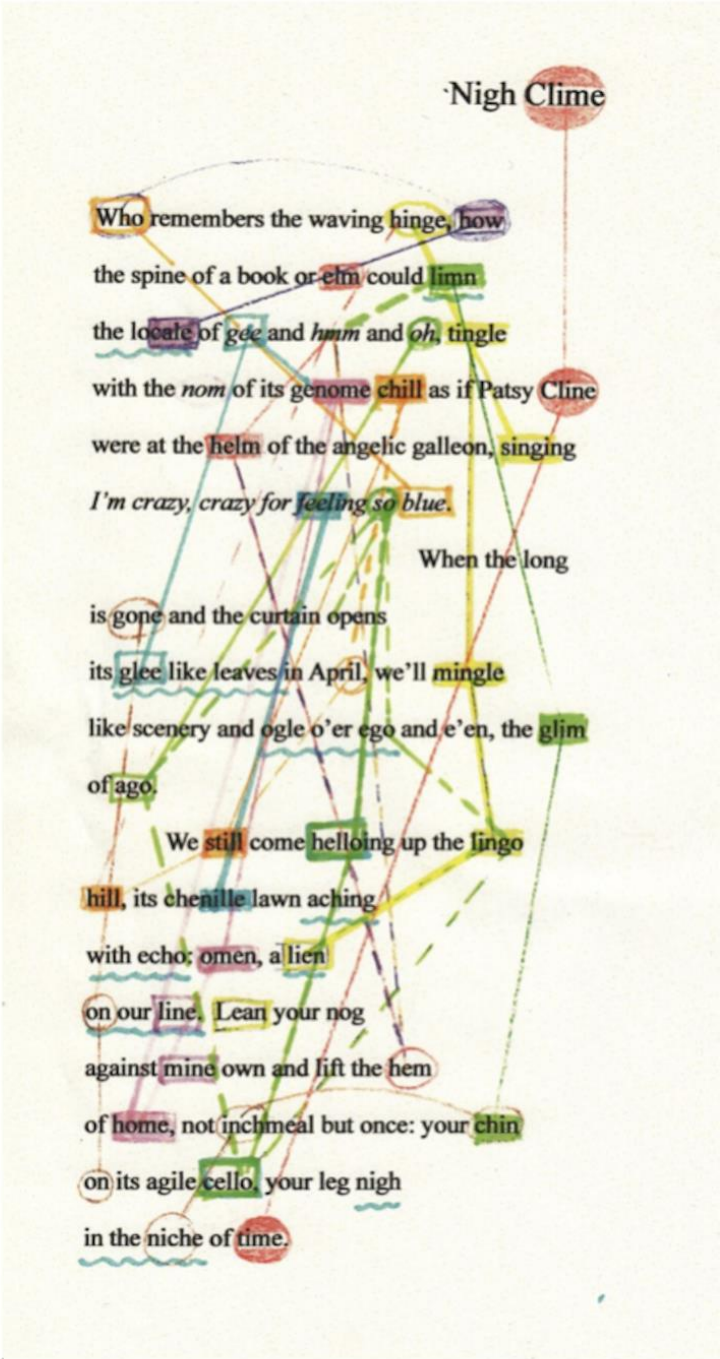
[20] Deleuze, Gilles. March 1987. "Lecture 11," *Seminar on Leibniz and the Baroque.* University of Paris.

[21] Hoover, Paul, ed. (2013) *Postmodern American Poetry.* 2nd edition. New York: W. W, Norton & Co: 867.

[22] Olson, *Op. cit.*: 17–18.



·Nigh Clime

Who remembers the waving hinge, how
the spine of a book or elm could limn
the locale of *gee* and *hmm* and *oh*, tingle
with the *nom* of its genome chill as if Patsy Cline
were at the helm of the angelic galleon, singing
I'm crazy, crazy for feeling so blue.
When the long
is gone and the curtain opens
its glee like leaves in April, we'll mingle
like scenery and ogle o'er ego and e'en, the glim
of ago.
We still come helloing up the lingo
hill, its chenille lawn aching
with echo: omen, a lien
on our line. Lean your nog
against mine own and lift the hem
of home, not inchmeal but once: your chin
on its agile cello, your leg nigh
in the niche of time.

It is interesting to note, in this regard, that "Nigh Clime" is made almost entirely of one-syllable words, words that can change meaning by the simple inversion, deletion or insertion of a letter. This means that Estes' poem is a poem whose single letters, as well as single syllables, engage in the kinetic spoken of by Olson. In addition to simple coherence Estes' words can also display mischievous, chameleon-like behavior. As can be seen in the text reproduced below (coloration mine) it truly is no exaggeration to state that the dynamic of "Nigh Clime" is akin to that of a pinball machine.

Note the extreme coherence of sounds and rhythms throughout this poem. Coherence is based primarily on rhyme and wordplay, from the localized "nigh in the niche" and "aching with echo" to distant "Clime," "Cline," and "time"; "tingle" and mingle" and "Who" and "blue." These elements certainly appear to occur as randomly as the bells, whistles, and flashing lights of a pinball machine; and, like the ball of a pinball machine, the constituent elements of Estes's poem have license to migrate loosely, with great apparent freedom and spontaneity, all over the board vertically, horizontally, and diagonally—holding together throughout it all! Because narrative content is minimal at best, localized and distant coherence in Estes's poem, and resultant auditory migration, stems largely from the basis of coherence on the level of sound and rhythm. Sound is prioritized over words and meaning. Hierarchy is gone. There is a great leveling in effect whereby the power structure of ordinary linear syntax is largely replaced by undulating waves of sounds and rhythms which have their own value. What we are left with is a field effect of proto-language, of language void of intentionality approximating "pure" language.

In this regard, the highly coherent, resonant sounds of Estes's poem are reminiscent of the disassembled letters and syllables of E. E. Cummings or the gaps and ciphers of Jorie Graham ("elipses, dashes, open-ended punctuation" used, according to Chiasson,[23] "to represent intuitions that aren't made of words, or not yet"). In this concept of simple language, of language on a formative level where meaning cannot yet be supplied, or is not even intended, words and syllables are more musical than lexical, are more like notes in a musical melody—from the flute of Orpheus perhaps?

[23] Chiasson, Dan. 2015. "Beautiful Lies: The Poetry of Jorie Graham." *The New Yorker*, 23 March 2015.

WORDS IN POETRY, NOTES IN MUSIC: SOME PARALLELS

When words cohere, two or more meanings can play off one another and ultimately discover kinship in the suggestion of modified, perhaps ambiguous, meanings. A very dramatic example of coherence, this time when two *letters* fuse and produce a new hybrid sound, would be when single consonant "t" in "cat" and consonant sound "h" of "hat" are seen to cohere as the consonant digraph "th" in the word "math." (Note too that in this example the word in which they appear—"math" short for "mathematics"—also marks an etymological merging of two different cultural periods, ancient Greece and modern English.) Similar phenomena occur in music, as when in his *Etudes* for piano composer Phillip Glass combines multiple shifts in tempo (e.g., 3/4 > 4/4 > 3/4 > 6/8) and by doing so produces finely architectured layers of multi-textured sound and rhythm. Like the rhythms and musical notations in a score composed by Glass, words and syllables in a poem can be similarly compressed in layers of sound and meaning. Their propensity to cohere means that values of sound (and silences!) between words and phrases can be arbitrarily extended or squeezed tight. The effects of alternating compression and relaxation among words can produce unexpected overlappings of sound and multiple converging layers of meaning, either of which might contribute favorably toward cementing poetry's characteristic ambiguity and virtuosity.

Continuing with analogies to musical composition, consider how individual notes cohere with others in the production of chords, harmonic patterns and progressions, transpositions, variations, and key changes throughout a piece of music. Surely there are profound similarities with poetic resonances (coherence) worth exploring here, but for the moment it is probably sufficient to merely draw attention to them for purposes of illustration. What stands out as significant in the comparison with music is that notes near and far across the keyboard speak and sing (resonate!) with one another throughout a musical composition in ways strikingly similar to how words mirror and speak to one another across both short and long distances within a given poetic text. In an essay entitled "Poetry: The Question of Home," Indian-born poet Meena Alexander has written the following: "I started writing poetry young…. The reason why I keep writing is still the same: For me it is the music of survival. There is an inner

voice that speaks to me, makes music out of words, makes notes out of syllables, makes rhythms out of what words cannot reach."[24]

The composer at the piano has her choice of notes from all up and down the keyboard; she selects this note and these notes, and not others. Similarly, at the computer keyboard, the writing poet types in this letter, and these other letters, and these letters only. From inception there is coherence in those chosen notes and letters, not others; these notes, syllables, and rhythms, not others. Underlying all combinations of notes/syllables there is coherence stemming from the original choice and intention of the composer-creator as a determining factor. Together, the notes and syllables chosen by the pianist and the poet on their respective "instruments" have a common bond with each other there in the composer's formative idea and in threads of creativity stemming from that seed idea. That bond, those common threads, the musical key or mood of that formative idea, will underlie and direct the composition's flow of coherence as it proceeds from start to finish.

The notes and words discussed in the preceding paragraphs are the bones, the bare bones, of their respective compositions. In poetry, it is ultimately the act of *naming*, of choosing this word over that word and all other words, that brings the poem into being. And the way naming occurs determines the form that the poem will take. In a sense, poetry is a naming ceremony in which words are handmaidens for the birth of a poem, they breathe the body of the poem into being. Ultimately, words comprise the structure underlying the interwoven fabric of sound, rhythms, feeling, and meaning generated by the poem. Like bones, the bones of a skeleton, words hold the poem together; words have their origin in coherence, and by continuing to generate and maintain coherence they are essential to ensuring the frictionless flow of a successful poem.

When words cohere…with the hour and the day, with the season and the year, with the perceiver and the perceived, with *each other*…at such times they succeed in going *there* where no single word can take us, where groups of ordinary words fail us, where language as it's ordinarily conceived cannot enter and has no place. When words cohere, they go there.

Such coherence speaks of harmonies beyond that of rhyme, of rhythms beyond syllable count and scansion and other such regularities of the poetic legacy. Such coherence in poetry crosses into new territory each

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[24] Meena Alexander's essay may be read in its entirety at poets.org, website of The Academy of American Poets.

time it is evoked. Such coherence can only be described as Orphic, not only because of its beguiling, otherworldly refinement, but rather more because, like Orpheus's protected and privileged descent into the underworld, the Orphic poet using his gift of language crosses over the threshold separating ordinary reality and extraordinary realms. That same gift of language enables him to *name* what is discovered in those realms and thereby, by virtue of Orphic language, express the revelatory signs of what has been seen, heard, and otherwise experienced in extraordinary realms. Commonly described as entrancing, oracular, and mystical, Orphic language is language forged from the depths of verbal expression and is in this sense truly original. It shimmers with the promethean, protean potencies of its deep origins. It sings because infinite harmony and song is the reality of those profound depths of nascent verbal expression.

A POEM BY WILLIAM BUTLER YEATS

Angie Estes' poem "Nigh Clime" is a dramatic, even extreme, representation of qualities that constitute undeniable field coherence in poetry. As just seen, her poem presents in highly concentrated fashion the full spectacle of sound-based coherence that is not so readily apparent to the reader of more traditional, meaning-focused poetry. The presentation of a theme, situation, or anecdote in a traditional poem, however, obliges the poet to a give attention to yet another sort of coherence in addition to sound. Sound is primary even in traditional verse, however, and Estes' poem affords a window of insight into how sounds and sound patterns might even play essential roles in communicating the fullest expression of a theme or storyline.

At this point in the essay, your attention is directed to a composition that displays a coherence of the more traditional sort, the much earlier poem by William Butler Yeats, "The Lake Isle of Innisfree." It is a poem in which the contribution of musically resonant sounds is an integral component of the Poet's rhythmic evocation of a beloved experience etched in memory. The poem is field worthy as well.

It has been said[25] that the poem originated in watery sounds Yeats had heard coming from a storefront on the streets of London, sounds that evoked fond memories of childhood visits to the lake and the sound of

[25] See, for example, "Yeats' Poetics," in Yves Bonnefoy, *Prose,* edited by Stephen Romer, John Naughton, and Anthony Rudolf. 2020. Manchester, England: Carcanet Press.

waves beating along its shores. Yeats himself stated in a letter that the poem "arose from his perception of the sound of drops of water falling" and his longing to leave the city called up by "the sound of the droplets."[26] In effect, the sound of those droplets echoes quite strikingly throughout the poem as it was subsequently written. The poem is reproduced in its entirety below. As you read, be aware of how the incantatory words and rhythms of the poem little by little cocoon the reader in the threads of its own enchantment, lifting both poem and reader beyond the boundaries of ordinary reality.

The Lake Isle of Innisfree

I will arise and go now, and go to Innisfree,
And a small cabin build there, of clay and wattles made;
Nine bean rows will I have there, a hive for the honey bee,
And live alone in the bee-loud glade.

And I shall have some peace there, for peace comes dropping slow,
Dropping from the veils of the morning to where the cricket sings;
There midnight's all a glimmer, and noon a purple glow,
And evening full of the linnet's wings.

I will arise and go now, for always night and day
I hear lake water lapping with low sounds by the shore;
While I stand on the roadway, or on the pavements grey,
I hear it in the deep heart's core.[27]

The incantatory quality mentioned above stems largely from the sound of lapping water present in the rhythmic back-and-forth, advancing-and-receding movement stemming from three lines broken by caesura (the brief pause marked by a comma) in each quatrain. This rhythm has the lulling, gently lilting effect of a barcarole and is sustained throughout the poem. The auditory quality is bolstered by the droplets "dropping slow,/ dropping from the veils" in stanza 2; and then in "lake water lapping with

[26] *Ibid.*: 365.
[27] Yeats' poem is in the public domain.

low sounds by the shore" in the final stanza. The mesmerizing cadence of the poem is sustained throughout, linking the poem (and the lake) to restful human physiology as it simulates the alternating expansion/ contraction and leisurely inhale/exhale of the lungs in breathing. All this owes to the lake water "lapping with low sounds" that Yeats hears "always night and day." He hears it while he "stands on the roadway, or on the pavements grey." But most of all he hears it "in the deep heart's core," which no doubt is why it is heard by us so prominently throughout his poem.

First published in 1890, "Innisfree" is almost 125 years older than the twenty-first century "Nigh Clime" (2013). Yet, even in Yeats the reader can appreciate how single words resonate *and move* throughout the poem with such profound kinetic correspondence and coherence as to generate a kind of field, a self-enclosed atmosphere that is its own self-reflective system comprised of altogether interconnected elements. With its fixed form, end rhyme, stanza structures, and measured rhythms (feet), it is also an example of what Olson's essay notes as a "closed" poem that displays what Dana Levin rightly refers to as a "poetic system."[28] Let's examine how this happens.

It is rhythms and music sensed in the Poet's deep heart's core that altogether naturally and logically gives rise to the poem we read on the page. Note, too, how the poem's various components—Innisfree itself, the bee-loud glade, the veils of morning, a purple glow of noon, the cricket's song and linnet's wings—all combine with the sound and rhythms of lapping water to create an atmosphere of fully integrated, otherworldly wholeness that no doubt mirrors the reality imprinted on the Poet's consciousness as a consequence of multiple, distant past reveries. Even without the enhancement of end-line rhyme (*abab*), these elements alone would be sufficient to create a coherent experience for the reader. In such a poem where everything is made vitally present and alive, everything seems to cast vitalizing darshan on everything else in an infinite correlation of overlapping harmonies functioning in the manner of Leibniz's monads.

Given the Poet's fierce love of Ireland, the country and the country's landscape, one might safely surmise that the lake isle of Innisfree represents not only a memory commemorated in verse, but the coded "core" of a vast repertoire of myths and fairy legends, their lore and allure

[28] Levin, Dana. 2023. "Some Notes on Poetry: Divination, Reverie, Dream," in *The American Poetry Review* 52, No.2; March/April: 19–21.

encapsulated in ancient songs of peasant folk—all of these together constituting a kind of "muse." Fully evident in the poem are Ireland's beauty, dreams, and illusions deeply internalized by Yeats and around which, according to Yves Bonnefoy, "many of his most cherished perceptions were organized."[29] Yeats "reveals he is still fascinated by the echo of the otherworldly on the island in the middle of the lake,"[30] and the reader can rightly envision a man wrapt in enchantment, a man like ourselves lulled by the rhythmic lapping of the lake's waters along the shore together with the droning buzz of honey-bees in "the bee-loud glade."

Before proceeding further, I ask you to consider the following. Note how while almost any word or group of words in the poem remains in a fixed position on the page and within the stanza, the sound of the word, its rhythm, and whatever image(s) are conjured by the word migrate freely across and down the page; and in doing so, their meaning can be amplified or otherwise modified through different lenses in the course of a reading. In my own case, certain words or phrases seem to linger in the course of reading (and subsequent readings) such that a kind of layering results; for example, the auditory drone of "honey bees" or "lapping sounds" of water along the shore, and the visual effects of "glimmering" and "glowing" are elements that get stuck in the mind and pulled along and superimposed upon whatever area within the poem the reader's primary focus has moved to. In the process multiple elements can get stacked atop one another in a dreamlike, interactive weaving that is fully in accord with the Poet's own state of reverie. The Poet's reverie is transferred to the reader. The Poet's experience and the reader's experience cohere and become as one. The layering and interweaving do after all stem from the introductory "I will arise and go now…" of the poem's first stanza, from which all the poem's subsequent words, lines, and stanzas do in fact ensue: "and go," "and build," "and live," "and have peace" etc. Finally, note too how all these related words and expressions cohere marvelously in the poem's final stanza and reprise: "I will arise and go now…" (line 1) "I hear it in the deep heart's core" (line 4).

This brief account drawn from personal experience is just a sampling of the way words, phrases, and images cohere in Yeats' poem. Something similar naturally occurs in the aftermath of reading almost any poem. While the verse form itself (and perhaps even an entire line or two) will

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[29] *Ibid.*, p. 354.
[30] *Ibid.*, p. 361.

probably remain vividly etched in the reader's mind, in general she is left with random "highlights," recollections of certain rhythms, particular words, significant images—a bit like Yeats' own recollections of Innisfree, subject of his poem. These often vague recollections may exist and coexist *in or out* of sequence and even be superimposed—like lapping waves of water!—on one another in a reader's experience of the poem. This too, I submit, must be considered a legitimate experience of the poem, for a poem's aftermath can provide useful insight into what is happening *even as the poem is being read*: similar events of migration and overlapping, afterimages, blurred distinctions etc. Any one of these events attests to cohering processes at work in the poem.

None of the remarks made in my discussion of the poems of Estes and Yeats may be particularly new to existing criticism. However, it is important to acknowledge that such commonplace tools of a poet as rhyme, meter/rhythm, alliteration, and even particular metaphors and images create an especially propitious environment for coherence to thrive in a given poem. While they all facilitate coherence, they also prepare the ground for the production of multiple meanings and loosening/dissolution of boundaries that are essential to poetry's agenda. As noted earlier, it is the propensity to cohere above all that distinguishes poetic language from everyday speech, so identifying and understanding what causes a poem's tendency to cohere directs attention to the inner values of a poem and their relationship to its outer expressions. This interplay between inner nature and outer nature—of a literary composition, of the human individual—has always been a primary focus of the humanities.

BACK TO OLSON

Yeats's poem to Innisfree is an example of "closed" poetic verse that contrasts dramatically with the open qualities displayed by Angie Estes in "Nigh Clime." The success of both poems, however, is derived largely from their unique capacities to generate coherence. With all respect to Olson's subtle critique of the "closed" poetry that preceded the "open" creations of himself and his generation (1950s and 1960s), the truth remains that poems are either good or not so good. They work or they don't; they are not "closed" or "open." Poems are poems, and all of the good ones, those created in a "closed" form (rhyme scheme, syllable count, prescribed versification and format) and "open" ones alike (free verse, or verse following breaks in breath), are good because they are *poems that open up*.

Good poems open up language, they open up traditions and mindsets, new channels of life and conscious experience in the poet, the reader, and the culture. They open us up by making us more receptive and by restoring our imagination. Like other forms of art, poetry instills in us an awareness of a kind of wholeness that, while always there, gets broken up in the course of everyday activities, cultural attitudes, and even language that seem to promote separateness.

Such separateness is a convenient illusion. The distinction between wholeness and separateness is an illusion prompted, caused or certainly facilitated largely by language. Under ordinary circumstances, we use language to break wholeness apart for analysis and for whatever intellectual pleasure we can derive from talking about it. But by virtue of words' capability to cohere, language can also dispel or remove the illusion of separateness and (re)create the vision of wholeness—as in poetry. While connection is a characteristic of poetry, it is also its function. A primary function of poetry would seem to be to create coherence, to dispel separateness (an illusion, a product of ignorance) and restore the wonder of wholeness (enlightenment). In everyday life, words fracture ideas into parts; in poetry, words cohere within ideas and facilitate restoration of wholeness.

Words in poetry, moreover, are used to strike up a meaningful correspondence, a coherent "accord" between outer empirical reality and our inner identity-self and the scope of its vision. In this peculiar sense, words are a form of seeing as much as is the traditional sense of sight. They serve to further connect us with objects of sight, hearing, smell, taste, and even touch. From the beginning, then, words have a cohering function and are instruments of coherence. Words and objects of experience, moreover, both arise out of consciousness, both are expressions of the what David Hinton in his translations and commentaries of Chinese Cha'an poetry refers to as the eternal, ongoing cosmic breath-force. By virtue of its peculiar kinetic virtuosity, poetry exemplifies "the matter and energy of the Cosmos seen together as a single breath-force surging through its perpetual transformations." Hinton notes that the sense of "reality as a dynamic breath-force tissue" is reinforced by the Chinese language itself where "there is no distinction between noun and verb" and "virtually all words can function as either."[31] Understood in this manner, the coherence experienced in poetry, the coherence of this paper's focus, simply hints at

[31] Hinton, David. 2020, *China Root: Taoism, Ch'an, and Original Zen*. Boulder: Shambhala Publications: 25.

the return to an original state of unity, of *total* coherence. Poetry, that is, opens to the Open.

That original state of unity is not just a hypothetical construct according to Maharishi and scholars in the field of Vedic Studies. The Veda, Maharishi has stated, is a cosmic blueprint and contains within its unmanifest, eternal structure the names and associated forms of all creation. It is, in fact, the transcendent source of all creation. On the unmanifest level of Veda, pure consciousness, name and form exist without distinction, unified. When the name is called into existence, the expressed form or object associated with that name naturally follows, much as a tree develops from the hollow of a seed rooted in the soil. Maharishi maintains, moreover, that the relationship between the primordial Vedic language and all other cultural languages is such that "the transcendental level of any word in any language has the same roots in the wholeness of Being, or Brahman. It is only on surface level of language that each language finds a different sound for a similar meaning"[32] If, in the common experience of modern spoken languages, the original correspondence between name (word) and form is seemingly lost, perhaps only in poetry its it provisionally regained. Hardly fully achieved, because out of reach, it is nevertheless frequently invoked or inferred as if its proximate realization were felt or anticipated. Even a mediocre poem will, in most instances, give at least the "impression" of deep correspondence. Is this a consequence of words' lingering memory of lost origin?

It has been noted that clay, paper, and even hair have memory. Humans have memory too, of course, and their poems are often rooted in memory. Could it be possible that the words they use, words created from the human experience, have memory as well? If, as just noted, words in poetry originate from a transcendental source deep in human consciousness, and deep within the consciousness of the Earth, then that memory, the deep memory of words, would certainly include memory of an undifferentiated state of transcendental pure consciousness without beginning and without end. It should be clear at this point that the position of this paper is that words in poetry *do* have memory of that transcendental origin and that this memory confers on them the capacity, and indeed the imperative, as words, to cohere.

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[32] Rhoda F. Orme-Johnson & Susan K. Andersen. Editors. (2010). *The Flow of Consciousness: Maharishi Mahesh Yogi on Literature and Language, 1971-1976.* Fairfield, IA: Maharishi University of Management Press: 126, 209-212.

Relevant to this discussion is the statement from Joy Harjo, Muscogee Indian and U.S. Poet Laureate, to the effect that "when you write poetry, or perform music, you follow the poetry, or the sound, back towards the place it comes from, which isn't bound by linguistic walls." She has also written, "Words are living beings."[33]

LIVING POETRY?

In this paper's opening pages, most readers must have been shocked to find it stated that words of a poem can see and hear, that they can even speak—call out—to one another. One must assume that, like Michael Ryan's "sprouting spokes" (cited earlier), this was written in a figurative manner in an attempt to communicate an intuitive sense of the inner mechanics of poetry, a sense perhaps that how the poem affects us (as we know it does) might mirror effects, and affects, that are at work within the poem itself. We readers all hear, see, and speak. Must we assume that these capabilities, these *skills* (or some approximation of them), are unavailable to whatever it is, that force, that drives the voice of a poem? And wouldn't this force, whatever it is, necessarily have a lot to do with the poet/creator of the poem?

Allow me to make a brief digression to the world of Albert Lee, a fifth-generation Navajo silversmith. "Each piece that I make is living. It's alive." These words are spoken by Albert Lee in a documentary filmed shortly before his death to commemorate his achievements and his legacy.[34] In the documentary Lee speaks with deep affection for the stones and metals he uses in his craft. He speaks fondly of pounding silver, cutting silver, heating the silver to an even temperature top and bottom, individually buffing each piece, designing and stamping. And the stones: "Turquoise is very sacred to our culture. Turquoise, the silver that we use, it's all from Mother Earth, and I always say, we are silversmiths, especially myself, we are giving life through precious metal and stones because…they are all from Mother Earth, the silver, gold that we use, the turquoise that we use, the coral." Then he continues: "What really excites me is, when I get the stones, the stones tell me what they want to be made…. The stones speak to me, and I enjoy working with all kinds of stones."

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[33] Harjo, Joy. Editor. 2020. *When the Light of the World Was Subdued, Our Songs Came Through.* New York, NY: W. W. Norton & Co.: 2.

[34] "Stones That Speak," mini documentary featuring Navajo artist and jeweler Albert Lee. Park City, Utah: Tanner Trading production, April 2022. (YouTube video)

But what really spoke *to me* in Lee's account of his association with stones, what forged in my thinking a striking connection between the work of this Navajo silversmith and poems that speak and see and hear is the following comment: "I strongly believe that every piece that I make—or whether it's another's art—is alive. Art is a living piece. Your emotions, your mind, your thought, your energy goes into every piece that you make and…it's alive. It's a live, living piece of jewelry, of art. And when a customer wears it, they feel your energy, they feel your love, and they feel your knowledge and appreciation." Like stones in a well-designed piece of jewelry, the pieces of a well-crafted poem "correspond." They delight in one another's presence. They relate to each other as if they were alive and dispense blessings through their rare, perfected beauty.

According to Lee's father, "how it's put together" is key. "You must make sure that your work is clean, you've got nice clean stamp work, nicely polished, and presentable to the customer." And finally, when all is said and done, the customer is as important to Lee as is a nice, clean piece of living jewelry. The jeweler's work finds ultimate fruition in the happiness expressed in the customer's reaction to the living wonder of artfully crafted metals and stones.

Words, the living elements of a poem, are a poet's primary materials. They are mined from deep within the "Mother Earth" of language and finished in the studio of invention. In the poet's studio workshop brute sounds barely expressed as language are pounded, cut, heated, buffed, and given the breath of life directly from the poet. In a poem, as in a piece of jewelry, "how it's put together" is key. Like the jeweler's stones and metals, the words of a poem must be put together well—clean, well-polished, and "presentable." From there they move out into the world alive, alive insofar as they speak to the reader from within the creative writer's poems. They speak to the reader in a manner not altogether different from the way Lee's crafted metals and stones speak to each other and to his customers. Put together well, the living components of a piece of jewelry will complement one another and *cohere,* just as living words in a poem will complement one another—perhaps by speaking to one another and embracing in acts of joyful coherence…much to the delight of the creator-poet and her appreciative readers.

HOW THEY'RE PUT TOGETHER

Albert Lee's father has explained that how it's put together is key for a piece of jewelry to be fully alive. If it's put together properly, it will be

"presentable." A poet also must give attention to how her poem is put together. All the pieces, all the words, must work together to produce the desired effect. Only then is the poem presentable. Joy Harjo gives graphic expression of this sentiment when she remarks, "All poems are little force fields, or little houses, and I figure if I can build it nice enough then the spirit of poetry will come and live in it."[35]

The assumption expressed through Harjo's statement seems to be that only when spirit is *present* will a poem or piece of jewelry be truly be *present*able. It will be perceived by the viewer/reader as pleasing, uniquely insightful or beautiful, and will elevate the spirit of the reader/viewer by its perceived and appreciated *presence*. So when I say "coherence just happens" in poetry, what I mean is that because of the way a poem is constructed, the poet has made it a space that spirit can inhabit and enliven, flowing freely like soma throughout word, line, and form.

There is no way that Joy Harjo could anticipate how profoundly her statement, her *image,* of "houses for spirits" would resonate in an essay with express ties to darshan, the traditional practice of viewing the divine spirit inhabiting temple images throughout India. The influence of this practice in my various thoughts on poetry is readily apparent from my ruminations around the poet's "muse" to the attention I devote to aspects of a poem's internal dynamics, words "seeing" one another, words giving and receiving "darshan" from another—having connection, coherence—in the production of "kinetic field resonance." Harjo could hardly anticipate that her image of "little houses" drawn from poetry would resonate with the production of the divine image in India. Let me make this clearer by citing a classic book on the subject, *Darshan: Seeing the Divine Image in India*, by Harvard professor Diana L. Eck. There Eck emphasizes that in India images of the deities are not mere statues, they are *presences*. The construction, consecration, and placement of the images in the temple space is accomplished under very strict codes and prescribed guidelines. Only when instructions for fashioning it are followed properly, to the letter, can the image be consecrated and considered suitable for housing the divine representation. "A well executed image, if it follows the rules of proportion laid down in [texts based on ancient traditions transmitted orally] and is pleasing to the eye, invites the deity to reside in it and is particularly auspicious to the

[35] "Joy Harjo: Poems are houses for spirits." Howard County Poetry and Literary Society, Columbia MD, 2008 (YouTube video, 2012).

worshippers…"[36] An image is supposed to be beautiful, since it is the abode of a deity. "Only an image made in accordance with the canon can be called beautiful." Only when the painstaking process is completed is the image made available for viewing for the purpose of darshan, for seeing the image and receiving its blessings.

Though on an entirely different level, Lee's work as a silversmith would seem to entail similar prescribed procedures combined with meticulous attention to detail: the intricate process of mining, refining, heating and pounding, buffing and polishing the metal and then carefully choosing the stones, their size, quality and their arrangement in the desired design is what makes his jewelry "come alive." Everything about the detailed, time-consuming art of the silversmith makes it suitable for "darshan" (and hopefully for purchase) of the customer. Likewise, the art of poetry. While varying considerably from poet to poet, detailed attention is given to assembling the poem, to making its words and overall presentation "powerful" for the reader's appreciation. In this way poetry, a piece of jewelry, and the divine image in the temple niche are all objects of "darshan" insofar as they are powerful and pleasurable to behold, bestow blessings, boons, gifts of beauty to be internalized by the viewer. While not divine representations, poems and jewelry often do communicate the divine spark—and occasionally fire—of creative intelligence that animates an artist's work.

The same might be said of any one of the arts. It might be said above all of the human body. The temple image, "activated" and set before the public for viewing, in addition to representing the deity, by extension also represents the inspired ideal of a fully realized human being, of humanity created to be a suitable housing for the divine. Doubtlessly this lofty status is intuited by Walt Whitman when he writes, "I sing the body electric" in *Leaves of Grass* (1855).

In *Hamlet,* too, we hear Shakespeare's character speak of the human in high-minded, exalted language: "What a piece of work is man! how noble in reason! how infinite in faculty! in form and moving how express and admirable! in action how like an angel! in apprehension how like a god! the beauty of the world! the paragon of animals!"[37] "And yet," Hamlet's voice trails off. The tortured state of the Prince of Denmark at this point in the play obliges him to face the disturbing reality that this

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[36] Eck, Diana L. 2007. *Darshan: Seeing the Divine Image in India,* 3rd edition. Delhi, Motilal Banarsidass: 51.

[37] *Hamlet*, Act II, Scene 2.

"work of man" often fails to realize its capacity to embody the wonders of the cosmos and rise to the divine status for which it was created. This is precisely the status spoken of in Javier Ortiz Cabrejo's "*Canción de las formas,*" discussed earlier.

It is also the reality addressed by Robert Keith Wallace in his groundbreaking *Neurophysiology of Enlightenment* (1977, now in its third printing), where the author speaks of enlightenment as a scientifically verifiable reality arising from the refinement of human physiology, a natural process that can be effectively enhanced through the adoption of techniques of mediation such as Maharishi's Transcendental Meditation. To their credit, the arts too, each in its own manner, have throughout history sought to promote realization of this goal. In his introduction to the poetry of Friedrich Hölderlin (German, 1770–1843), for example, Richard Sieburth cites *the artist's role as mediator* from Martin Heidegger's commentaries on the German poet:

> "…men and gods, at once distinct and interdependent, come into being through each other, for in the space defined by their reciprocal difference lies the poetic act of *naming* that grounds or inaugurates (*stiftet*) their relation (*Verhältnis*). The place of the poet is therefore always *in between*: his language institutes measure and establishes proportion, mediating between gods and mortals, bringing about a reconciliation of opposites in which, as Hölderlin learned from his study of Greek philosophy, part coincides with whole…and unity corresponds to diversity…."[38]

CLOSING THOUGHTS

In *The Art of Attention: A Poet's Eye*, poet and essayist Donald Revell has written eloquently about the role of attention in poetry—which he claims must always be innocent. Revell's thoughts came into play quite usefully in my earliest reflections on darshan in poetry. It is the poet's attention (his seeing, her insight, their clarity of refined vision) that informs the poem, and it is this vision that gets projected out onto the reader, in effect shining a light of fresh vision into the eyes of the reader (and from there to the mind, heart, feelings, etc.). Revell's thoughts provided some of my initial insights into darshan as the word translates and relates to the

[38] Hölderlin, Friedrich. 1984. *Hymns and Fragments*, translated by Richard Sieburth. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press: 20.

experience of poetry. He wrote the following lines, for example: "... poetry is a form of attention, itself the consequence of attention. And, too, I believe that poems are presences, themselves the consequence of vivid presentations, events as may be called, in Dame Julian of Norwich's word, 'showings'"[39]

And then.... In his address to the Global Conference on Unified Field-Based Administration,[40] Maharishi Mahesh Yogi spoke of Brahm, the Supreme Reality, as "Totality": "Brahm is all that there is"; and "All this is unity, Brahm.... There is no duality." Brahm is the "reality of Totality, Infinity realized as the living reality of everyday life." With regard to the tendency of words to cohere—whether through "contrived" situations and intentions (such as rhyme, alliteration, rhythmic patterns, recurring images etc.) or through "naturally occurring" events (spontaneous operations of consciousness, random associations and resonances, accidents of reader recall, converging narratives etc.)—I think coherence is there because of the universal presence of Brahm and operations of Brahm Darshan that occur, not only as functions of creative intelligence in the work of composition but even later in the finished product, in the poem and in readers' response to the poem. Not for naught has poetry been considered to be the province of "winged words," and the wings of a poet's words owe much to their fundamental difference from words as they are used in everyday mundane language, most especially with regard to their propensity to cohere, to become "sticky" and seek to establish relations both near and far in the poem; in short, to seek *unity* through coherence and ultimately their annihilation as words—limited and limiting—through poetic transport or the phenomenon of what Octavio Paz has called *Mahaprajnaparamita*, "great-wisdom-other-shore-reached."[41]

Maharishi speaks at length of the eternal ongoing dynamics of Brahm: "What is there is unity, and unity without duality —purely unity. And that is unity between the administration, administrator, and the administered." These words led me to consider that this internal dynamics of Brahm—call it (following the lead of Ortiz Cabrejos's book title) "Brahm Darshan"—is what accounts for, or is related to, the administration, administrator, and administered of a poem; that is to say, the subtle dynamics of unity within Brahm correlates with the integrated, interactive

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[39] Revell, Donald. 2007. *The Art of Attention: A Poet's Eye*. Minneapolis, MN: Graywolf Press: 5.

[40] Maharishi Mahesh Yogi. 2007. "The World Will Bask in the Sunshine of Bliss". *Transcendental Meditation News* 4, No. 7: 3.

[41] Paz, Octavio. 1973. T*he Bow and the Lyre*, translated by Ruth L. C. Simms. Austin: University of Texas Press: 106–107.

activities of the creator-poet, the poet's words, and the poet's readers. This line of thinking receives reinforcement in words that follow later in Maharishi's address, where he states, "This is the science of administration, which the United Field, Brahm, is *observing*, or is *initiating* or is *working with* (emphasis mine)." Without losing essential unity Brahm resides equally everywhere and in all forms. The science of Brahm's administration is accomplished through networks as subtle and innocent as darshan, through operations inherent in the omnipresent, eternal, ongoing dynamics of creative Silence moving within pure consciousness.

As I envision them, these subtle systems of darshan might operate within a poem somewhat like the subterranean mycorrhizal networks that undergird a forest with their unseen web of communication and nutrition. All creation runs on and under the administering gaze of Brahm! Brahm underlies, nourishes, and holds together in unity the diversity of birds and trees in the forest, ships and seas, and groups of different animals, people, lands, and cultures. Like the multiple deities distributed throughout an Indian temple, Brahm has many names and forms. Brahm resides in all forms and all beings without identifying with any of them—"*Neti-Neti*" not this, not this. By virtue of the silent administration of Brahm everything is interconnected and operates in modes both visible and invisible with the simple innocence of breathing in and out—or in the manner of words connecting, disconnecting, and reconnecting again in a poem. In the words of Rainer Maria Rilke, "You come and go / …all things / sing you…"[42]

In a sense, the art of poetry has much in common with Yogic Flying, where consciousness is found to cohere collectively in resonant variations between and among individuals gathered in a group. Towards the end of his Conference address, Maharishi states that Yogic Flying is that practice whereby "complete freedom may be infused with such deep *coherence* and *integration* that negativity will not arise (emphasis mine)." And this: "Man-made laws will not be necessary to regulate life of society. No!" In like manner, coherence and integration are naturally occurring phenomena of poetry and constitute the natural inclination of words. Man-made poetic techniques of composition merely facilitate and advance these qualities. Throughout the lines of a poem, as in the flying hall, there is a universal effect of nourishing all the elements that constitute the life of the poem. "It is called Samhita, togetherness. It is Brahm." There is no separation in it. Distance is no barrier to it. Here, there, and everywhere…. "It is coherence; it is only coherence." There's a sense echoing throughout the poem of

[42] Rilke, Rainer Maria. 1905. "You Come and Go," from *The Book of Hours*.

Aham Brahmāsmi, "I am Brahm," and my nature is to cohere. Expression of coherence in poetry can be enhanced by any number of "advanced techniques" of composition, but in essence its expression remains as simple, as innocent, as the expression of Brahm. Like Brahm, coherence in poetry simply *is*.

ADDENDUM

Casual readers may not have made the connection between the Heidegger/Sieburth commentary on the poet's *mediating role* appearing on p. 65, above, and the parallel, interactive roles of coherence and intimations of darshan in the poetic experience discussed throughout this paper. Heidegger's notion of the work of poetry as "the meeting place," in particular, deserves the reader's attention because it gets straight to the heart, so to speak, of the experience of kinetic field resonance in poetry. The expansion on Heidegger's thought that follows will provide amplification and depth to considerations of darshan and words that cohere within the larger context of kinetic field resonance in the language of poetry.

As reviewed in this paper, the poet and his poem can rightfully claim these words of bell hooks as their own: "I am here to make words.... I belong in this place of words. This is my home."[43] The poet draws the word from an ocean of possibilities in the silent recesses of mind, and he places that word *here*, in this place and time. If she is lucky, she may even catch that word on the wing, so impatient to manifest is the word that it fairly pops into expression. In any event, she places the word in this manifest place in time, with this sound and meaning, with this form.

The poet conjures the word from the seclusion of a writer's study or, alternately, the word might show itself while he is out for groceries or on a cross-country flight—wherever he happens to be really—and he places it in his poem, a place that is its own space entirely. "Like a rock"[44] he places it in his poem, which, being a poem, allows the word to mingle with other words, to find resonances that are "simpatico," amiable and even profound; other words and sounds which, by virtue of their compounded effect, evoke transport, memory of that "*origen primera esclarecida*"

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43 bell hooks. 1996. *Bone Black: Memories of Girlhood*. New York, NY: Henry Holt & Co.: 182–183.

44 From Gary Snyder's poem, "Riprap": "Lay down these words / Before your mind like rocks / placed solid, by hands / In choice of place, set / Before the body of the mind / in space and time..."

spoken of by Luis de Leon,[45] that wholeness without beginning or end from whence they took finite form and meaning. Within the space of the poem, the word, together with other words, is permitted to flit in and out, back and forth, between its boundless, unexpressed origin and its finitely defined function and role. You have already witnessed this happening in Estes' "Nigh Clime," where a poetic realm of resounding sound and vibrant possibilities is created as words embrace and intermingle throughout a poem's lines with barely constrained delight. A poem such as this approximates that dynamic encounter or passage back and forth between absolute and relative, men and gods spoken of by Heidegger and Sieburth.

By virtue of their cohering properties, words working together in a poem can give readers a taste of the vastness of their own journey from wholeness and back again. That they can do so is a credit to the skill and rare gifts of the poet, for when one works with words—conjuring them, placing them—one inevitably works with them against a background of wholeness, that same conceptual unity of vision that inspired them and from which they initially arose. In a poem, it's as if all things are interconnected by virtue of a unifying "gaze" (a seeing via the ear), the subtle recognition of deep connection in unity.

The poet draws his words from No-Time and places them fully formed in time, the time of his poem. As he mediates between time and No-Time, as he captures No-Time in words and the boundless within boundaries, the poem demands that he do so in such a way that balance is struck between part and whole, unity of vision and diversity of means. In this way, poetry opens awareness to subtle recognition of that deep connection by offering glimpses of the eternal give-and-take between manifest and unmanifest throughout the poem and all creation. Darshan in its many guises gives affirmation of the unity between "the administration, the administered, and the administrator" spoken of by Maharishi, above.

In writing his poem, the poet creates "a room" ("stanza" comes from the Italian word for room), he builds "a home" (cf. Joy Harjo's "little houses for spirits") or better still "a temple" (cf. Rilke), which will be that unique space, a meeting place, a mediating space where words <u>and worlds</u> meet

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[45] Its "first, exalted origin," from his "Ode to Francisco Salinas," sixteenth-century Spanish music theorist and organist. Luis de Leon was a lyric poet, monk, mystic philosopher, theologian, and academic. He was particularly well positioned to speak of "memory of lost wholeness," having spent four years exiled and imprisoned as a result of false accusations made against him to the Spanish Inquisition.

and *cohere*. These worlds that cohere, like words that cohere, are not really all that distant from one another; rather (following Heidegger) they are *neighboring*, *near*, *nigh*: my neighbor is the "near-dweller."[46] In fact, the space in which a poem is realized is a space of high communion, a space comprising an attitude of openness to the Open—to truth, *the disclosure* of ultimate Reality. Poetry is humanity's building and dwelling place, and ideally it becomes a meeting place. Like the sacred temple precinct, it is that place *in between,* a place of mediation between earth and sky, divinities and mortals—what Heidegger calls "the fourfold."[47] Like stanza, *Raum*, and room, poetry is "a place cleared or freed for settlement and lodging" and "a space from which something *begins its presencing*."[48] It is a space from where something can disclose its darshan.

As noted by Heidegger, it is the function of art to provide "the becoming and happening of truth," and the ground is prepared for this event to happen when a reader creates a space (*Raum*, "room") for the poem. In a remarkable exposition of *cohering,* Heidegger describes how the reader becomes the poem she is reading as well as its builder, since for Heidegger building has dwelling as its goal and, in a sense, to build is already to dwell. Poetry is building understood as action and completed deed; conjuring and placement of words; the vibrant, living embrace of the fourfold—the reaching out and meeting place of earth and sky and mortal man and godhead. And note this: Heidegger's fourfold represents primal oneness insofar as "the four—earth and sky, divinities and mortals, *belong together in one* (emphasis ours)."[49]

For readers familiar with the Vedic Science of Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, Heidegger's exposition of "the meeting place" doubtlessly brings to mind at least two things. One is *Sthapatya Veda*, or Vedic architecture; the other is *Nyāya*, one of six darhanas of Vedic philosophy and characterized by Maharishi as "the lamp at the door." Without going into great detail, it is quite remarkable how greatly certain aspects of these—Sthapatya Veda and Nyāya—resonate with Heidegger's words on art and poetry and bear striking parallels with qualities of poetry and with art works in general. Both establish or explain relationship between inner and outer, parts and whole, human and cosmos as in the statement, "The place of the poet is

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46 Heidegger, Martin. 1971. *Poetry, Language, Thought.* Translated by Albert Hofstadter. New York, NY: Harper & Row: 145.

47 *Ibid.*: 142–143.

48 *Ibid.*: 154.

49 *Ibid.*: 149.

therefore always *in between*: his language institutes measure and establishes proportion, mediating between gods and mortals..."[50]

As can be seen in Chapter II of *Poetry, Language, Thought*, Heidegger chooses the temple as a primary element in his exposition on the origin of the work of art. Poised to expound his ideas, Heidegger is prompted to invoke *phusis*, a Greek word whose various meanings include "bringing forth" or "coming to be"—the opening of being, which is precisely what (for Heidegger and others) poetry strives for. Two things are worthy of note here: 1) personified Phusis is goddess of the origin and ordering of nature; and 2) in the manner of darshan, "the temple-work…opens up the world and at the same time sets the world back again on earth."[51]

As in an experience of darshan, the reader of a poem is lifted out of her finite, solitary condition and woven into the poem and that poem's larger world. Poetry is a unique "building" where language speaks by giving fullest expression to the "mimetic sensuousness" and innermost materiality of objects together with the beyond. In the temple of the poem, in that uniquely rarified meeting place, the reader establishes a vital connection with the poetic material and the world beyond the immediate consciousness of the poem. She coheres with wholeness.

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[50] See footnote 36.

[51] *Ibid.*: 42–43.

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